

## Select Miscellany.

## NANCY.

In brown holland apron she stood in the kitchen;  
Her sleeves were rolled up and her cheeks all aglow;  
Her hair was coiled neatly, when I last saw her,  
Stood watching while Nancy was kneading the dough.

Now, who could be kinder, or brighter or sweeter,  
Or who hum a song so delightfully low?  
Or who look so slender, so graceful, so tender,  
As Nancy, sweet Nancy, while kneading the dough?

How dainty she pressed it, and squeezed it, caressed it,  
And twisted and turned it, now quick and now slow.  
Ah, me, but that madness I've paid for in sadness!  
'Twas my heart she was kneading as well as the dough!

At last, when she turned for her pan to the dresser,  
She saw me and blushed, and said shyly, "Please, go,  
Or my bread I'll be spoiling, in spite of my toiling."  
If you stand here and watch while I'm kneading the dough.

I begged for permission to stay. She'd not listen;  
The sweet little tyrant said, "No, sir! I'm not!"  
Yet when I had vanished on being thus banished,  
My heart stayed with Nancy while kneading the dough.

I'm dreaming, sweet Nancy, and see you in fancy,  
Your heart, love, has softened and pined my woe,  
And we, dear, are rich in a dainty was kitchen.  
Where Nancy, my Nancy, stands kneading the dough.

—Century.

## The Lost Manuscript—An Editorial Romance.

Mr. Parker was flurried; his face was disturbed, almost distorted, by an unusual expression of annoyance and disgust; and when his eye-glasses dropped from his nose, as they had a way of doing, he replaced them with a kind of vicious energy. His desk was in a state of chaos to which he had reduced it in a half-hour's search of increasing vigor; usually it was a model of neatness and order, every pigeon hole was distinctly marked and dedicated to a specific purpose, and every paper lodged in any one of these carefully discriminated apartments was numbered, dated, and deftly folded. It was part of John Parker's character to be orderly, and it was also the necessity of his occupation. As the managing editor of a popular magazine, which furnished a large circle of readers with a monthly installment of the best current literature, he found himself in the vortex of a whirlpool of correspondence and manuscripts that came in every morning with the buoyant energy of a flood-tide, and subsided every afternoon with the languid, reluctant movement of an ebb that always left a discouraging debris behind. There were days when Mr. Parker actually hated the mail, and mentally wished that the government might come to some temporary ruin in order that the mails might be suspended for a week. But the wished-for disturbance never came, and the government continued to perform its functions as letter-carrier with deliberate regularity.

The work of conducting a large correspondence was onerous enough, but it was the reading of manuscripts which devoured Mr. Parker's time, consumed his mental vigor, exhausted his patience, and kept him continually on the verge of resigning his position. They came from all quarters of our own capacious country and from beyond the seas; they treated every possible theme in every conceivable manner, and they exhibited every variety of penmanship from the formal precision of apparent copperplate to the free, bold hand which scorned all the traditions of orthography.

When Mr. Parker reached his office in the morning he exchanged the Prince Albert frock coat which he uniformly wore for a less pretentious garment, carefully adjusted his eye-glasses, and seated himself at his desk with an expression in which Roman fortitude and Christian resignation were happily mingled. He proceeded to separate the heap of manuscripts which an assistant had placed before him into three smaller piles; in one he collected all the verse, in a second all the stories, and in a third all the miscellaneous contributions. Then he read, conscientiously, verse, tale, and essay, marked the larger number of each kind with an unhesitating and unmistakable R, noted the fact of acceptance on one or two, and reserved a few for further consideration. As a rule this work brought him to midday, and to the second chapter of his daily task.

At thirty, Mr. Parker had already acquired an orderliness which had become a second nature; and, therefore, he was uncommonly flurried and disturbed on this particular morning by his inability to find a certain manuscript which he had read, folded, and indorsed with his approval one week before. In his endeavor to find it he had thoroughly examined every part of his desk, searched every pigeon-hole, and now, flushed and a little dusty, he was deliberating as to what he should do next. At length he touched an electric bell at the side of his desk, and was immediately confronted by a small boy.

"Ask Mr. Perkins to come here a moment,"

The boy disappeared, and was replaced a moment later by Mr. Perkins, who also wore eye-glasses, and was one of the assistant editors.

"Good morning Mr. Perkins. I am a good deal troubled because I have mislaid a manuscript. It came about a week ago, and was a very uncommon story. The title was 'John Dolline's Quest.' Do you recollect seeing it?"

Mr. Perkins looked at the assistant editor with the evident hope of an answer that would end his perplexity, but he was doomed to disappointment; Mr. Perkins had not read the manuscript, and knew nothing about it. Mr. Parker thereupon, and very deliberately, examined his desk a second time without any result, then walked up and down his office a few minutes in evident vexation, and finally recovered himself with an effort, rang for a stenographer, and addressed himself to his correspondence.

At half-past four Mr. Parker was ready to leave his office; he had cleared his desk, resumed his Prince Albert frock, and was on the point of putting on his light overcoat, when the boy brought him a card. He put on his eye-glasses and looked at it suspiciously; he evidently expected a new contributor.

"Miss Elinor Ferguson," he muttered, *sotto voce*; "who in the world is she? Well," speaking to the boy, who stood waiting, "show her in."

Miss Elinor Ferguson proved to be a very comely young person, simply but admirably dressed, and conveying by her quiet dignity and composure full information as to her social traditions and surroundings. Mr. Parker was pre-eminently a person of taste; he knew instinctively what was good, not only in quality but in form, and before he had asked his visitor to be seated he had given her the benefit of his unqualified approval. The young lady hesitated a moment, as if the business in hand were new to her, but her voice betrayed no nervousness when she said, noting the overcoat on his arm:

"I will detain you only a moment. I learned yesterday that there was a va-

cancy in your office, and, although I have had no experience in such a position, I should like the opportunity of trying to fill it."

Mr. Parker instantly determined to place her at the vacant desk; she gave him such an impression of finish and completeness that he was sure she would do anything well.

"The place is not a particularly desirable one," he said, before answering her application; "the work is entirely clerical, and not very interesting, I fear."

"The nature of the work will not trouble me if I can only do it," was the reassuring reply of Miss Ferguson; whereupon Mr. Parker asked her to come the next morning, and, in parenthesis, and as if it were a matter of small moment mentioned the compensation she would receive. He held the door open as she passed out, and then followed her down stairs at a becoming distance. More than once, as he walked up the avenue to his room, he questioned the wisdom of his speedy decision; but when over doubt arose it was instantly confronted by that graceful and finely poised figure, and was dissolved into thin air. More than once, too, a shade of annoyance rested on his face at the thought of the missing manuscript, but the soft splendor of the October afternoon and the brilliant throng of carriages and pedestrians crowding the avenue diverted his mind from his work, and made him keenly receptive of the movement and charm of his surroundings.

The next morning, at the appointed time, Miss Ferguson was at her desk. Her training was immediately evident; she seemed to know what was to be done by instinct, and needed no fuller direction than a hint. In a week she had not only mastered the details of her work, but by systematization had so reduced it that she asked for more, and had been assigned more difficult and exacting tasks. Mr. Parker had brief interviews with her, and treated her with the studious courtesy which he accorded to all women. He watched her work closely, and noted the fact that she was not only exact, but showed a general intelligence far beyond the requirements of her position. Meanwhile the missing manuscript had not been found, and the editor was becoming hardened on the subject when a note, in a delicate feminine hand, reached him through the mail one morning, and reminded him that, though the sketch had been in his hands more than a month, no intimation of its fate had reached the writer. Instantly Mr. Parker's perplexity returned, increased fourfold; the sketch had impressed him as a very original and striking piece of work, and he was really anxious to print it; he was disappointed, therefore, as an editor keenly alive to the value of good work, and he was also embarrassed in sending any communication to the author. Suppose she had kept no copy, or had destroyed the original draft? He was at his wits' ends, when his eye fell upon a small case of manuscripts that for lack of return postage or failure to send addresses, had been filed until called for; it was barely possible that the missing story had strayed into this repository of unsuccessful literature. Just before leaving the office that afternoon, he sent for Miss Ferguson.

"I am in a dreadful dilemma, Miss Ferguson," he said, smilingly. "I have lost a manuscript, or at least mislaid it. It was a story entitled 'John Dolline's Quest,' and was written, if my recollection serves me, on unruled letter paper. The story was so remarkable that I should exceedingly regret to lose it, to say nothing of my embarrassment in conveying that fact to the writer. It is barely possible that the manuscript has been put into this case, and I am going to ask you to make the search."

At the mention of the name of the missing manuscript Miss Ferguson had flushed slightly, and when Mr. Parker had ended she said hesitatingly: "Did you say it was a story?"

"Yes, or, perhaps, more accurately, a character study, of uncommon power. It gave an account of a man who, in a moment of great temptation, committed a sin and lost all sense of his personal identity, and whose whole subsequent life was a search for himself. It was a very striking piece of work."

Miss Ferguson had already turned to the case, and Mr. Parker did not see the deepened color on her face. He had no sooner gone than she abruptly closed the little glass doors and returned to her desk. The next morning Mr. Parker was delighted to find "John Dolline's Quest" lying on his desk; he was so thoroughly pleased that he failed to note how tired Miss Ferguson looked when he went into her room to thank her, or the more singular fact that the manuscript lacked both date and number.

A month later "John Dolline's Quest" was in the hands of seventy thousand readers in all parts of the world, and, curiously enough, they agreed with the editor in their judgment of its literary quality. It was certainly a sketch of a very unusual kind; the motive was subtle, intellectual, and it was wrought out with the most delicate literary skill, and with a boldness and vigor of construction which gave it instant popularity. Every body who read it talked about it; the lesser newspapers copied it; two or three leading dailies and the foremost literary journal published editorials on the moral aspects of the problem presented by the unknown writer; for the story had been published anonymously. Mr. Parker was overwhelmed with inquiries and letters; there were people in all parts of the country who had been wonderfully touched by "John Dolline's Quest," and could not content themselves with anything short of a long letter to the editor. The mails were visibly increased in bulk by the correspondence on this particular subject, and Mr. Parker's delight at having brought out a new writer was a little cooled by the additional labor which his discovery of original talent was costing him. Curiously enough, he did not know who the writer was, for no address was found on the manuscript, and the single letter of inquiry had gone into the wastebasket. He gave himself very little concern about the matter, however, for it was incredible that the writer of so successful a story would not speedily put herself in communication with him, after a silence on his part which would seem inexplicable to her.

Several weeks passed away without word or sign from the author of "John Dolline's Quest," and Mr. Parker was beginning to be anxious; he wanted more work from the same hand, and he began to fear that his prize had been beguiled into the office of some competitor. He was puzzled, too, by the apparent indifference of the writer of a story which had sold an extra in everybody's mouth; did she care nothing for such a success? One evening, as he was sitting at his desk in his room asking himself these questions for the hundredth time, he pulled out a

package of papers from a pigeon-hole, and, lo! there dropped out the original manuscript of "John Dolline's Quest." There was no doubt about it; he instantly recognized the peculiar hand in which it had been written, and on the back were the date of receipt, number, and memorandum of acceptance. Moreover, the sight of the article recalled distinctly the fact that he had brought the story home for more careful reading, and had placed it in his desk; the circumstances had entirely escaped him, but now they all came back in a flash. John Parker was thunder-struck; if he had been perplexed before, he was hopelessly confused now. The original manuscript had never been out of his possession, and yet Miss Ferguson had supplied a copy over night! He looked up the issue of the magazine, and compared the printed story with the manuscript in his hand; they were identical save in a few phrases and turns of expression. As he recalled Miss Ferguson's copy, he remembered that the handwriting was very different from that before him, and as he recalled the note of inquiry he was sure that its penmanship was the same as that of the original manuscript!

He lighted a fresh cigar, and began to walk up and down his room, seeking vainly for some solution of the problem. He tried one theory after another, but none of them fitted the facts, and finally he gave up in despair; there was no rational explanation unless Miss Ferguson had stolen the story from the writer, which was incredible; or unless she had written it herself, which, in view of all the circumstances, seemed equally incredible. Mr. Parker walked and walked, and the longer he walked and thought the more uncomfortable he felt. His feeling, if he had analyzed it as closely as the novelists who contributed stories to the magazine were in the habit of analyzing such emotions, was warmer and more intense than the simple editorial problem would have justified; the fact that Miss Ferguson was involved seemed to invest the circumstances with a personal interest of a kind which he had never felt before.

The next morning Mr. Parker had reached no conclusion, but he had decided what to do. He sent for Miss Ferguson, and, when she presented herself, handed her the manuscript without a word of comment. If he had felt any misgiving as to the result it was dissipated by the flush which suffused the girl's face when she understood that he had discovered her connection with the story.

"I owe you an explanation, which I ought to have made earlier," she said; "I wrote this story six months ago, and had too little confidence in it to send it to any magazine. I laid it on a book-rack in my room, and thought of it until the afternoon when you asked me about the lost story. I was so struck by the title that I asked for its character, and from your description I knew the story must have been my own. I hurried to my boarding-house and found the manuscript missing. It had probably been taken by a woman who had left the house suddenly not very long before, and whom I had instinctively distrusted. Your strong commendation stimulated me to reproduce it. I sat up the whole night, and in the morning laid the story on your desk without explanation. These are the facts, which I should have put into your possession before if I had been able to overcome my timidity. It is the first piece of literary work I ever attempted."

Whatever John Parker's feelings were while Miss Ferguson was making this explanation, he carefully concealed them. When she had finished, he extended his hand cordially, and said:

"I congratulate you on having made a very great success. Your future is likely to be an enviable one. Have you written anything since 'John Dolline's Quest'?"

Her reply was to leave the room and return with another sketch. The same afternoon, as he handed her a generous check for both contributions, he told her that he did not expect her to remain longer in her present position, adding, with considerable emphasis:

"I have another place in view for you, if I can persuade you to take it."

Nothing was heard from the person who had brought "John Dolline's Quest" to the Magazine, although several devices were employed for that purpose; the sudden and wide popularity of the sketch probably deterred her from making any attempt to profit by her theft. Three months later, as they were coming out of a hotel in Washington, Mrs. Parker suddenly turned to her husband and asked:

"What was the place you had in view for me, John?"

"The one you now occupy, my dear."—*H. W. M. in Christian Union.*

## A Simple Disinfectant.

One pound of green copperas, costing seven cents, dissolved in one quart of water, and poured down a water-closet, will effectually concentrate and destroy the foulest smells. On board ships and steamboats, where there is nothing so nice to purify the air. Simple green copperas, dissolved in anything under the bed, will render a hospital, or other places for the sick, free from unpleasant smells. In fish-markets, slaughter-houses, sinks, and wherever there are offensive gases, dissolve copperas and sprinkle it about, and in a few days the smell will all pass away. If a cat, rat or mouse dies about the house, and sends forth an offensive gas, place some dissolved copperas in an open vessel near the place where the nuisance is, and it will purify the atmosphere. Then, keep all clean.

QUITE a difference: "Oh, will he bite?" exclaimed one of Middletown's sweetest girls, with a look of alarm when she saw one of the dancing bears on the street the other day. "No," said her escort, "he cannot bite—he is muzzled; but he can hug." "Oh," she said, with a distracted smile, "I don't mind that."—*Middletown (Del.) Transcript.*

If the New York papers keep on "cutting rates," by-and-by the government will have to issue a new coin with which the people can buy a New York paper. If it is made small enough it can also be used for foreign missions and other charities.—*Burlington Hawkeye.*

The language of flowers: "You are not quite so large as a whole city." "You are a big sunflower, scornfully, to a humble violet." "No, sir," said the violet, modestly lowering its head, "I am only a sub-herb."—*Louisville Courier Journal.*

A bald-headed man, who has heard that the hairs of a man's head are numbered, wants to know if there is not some place where he can obtain the back numbers.—*Cincinnati Saturday Night.*

The quality of mercy is not strained; but much of the stuff called mercy ought to be.—*New Orleans Picayune.*

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